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TAGS: OPRC, KMDR, KPAO, GM
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. GERMANY-U.S. RICE VENEZUELA
WTO;BERLIN

- A. Lead Stories Summary
- B. (U.S.) Policy On Torture
- C. (Germany-U.S.) Reaction To El Masri Case
- D. (U.S.-Ukraine) Rice In Kiev
- E. (Venezuela) Elections
- F. (WTO) Hong Kong Meeting, Trips

- A. Lead Stories Summary

HEADLINES

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Opposition Demands More Information On CIA Flights And the El Masri Case (Frankfurter Allgemeine)

Merkel Risking Conflict With Americans (Sueddeutsche Zeitung)

United States Bans Cruelties During Interrogations (Die Welt, Tagesspiegel)

United States Announces Changes In Controversy Over Torture (Frankfurter Rundschau)

Health Problems For Passive Smokers (Berliner Zeitung)

Editorials focused on German-American relations and the clarification of the U.S. policy towards torture. ZDF-TV's early evening newscast heute opened with a story on the EU budget conflict, and ARD-TV's early evening newscast Tagesschau opened with a story on U.S. policy concerning torture.

B. (U.S.) Policy On Torture

1. "Haunted"

Stefan Dietrich argued in a front-page editorial in center-right Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/8):

"We cannot ignore the fact that the greatest dangers for the people does not emanate from overzealous intelligence service agents, but from Islamic fanatics who have declared an unconditional war on 'the West.' But leaders on both sides of the Atlantic have a different view since the establishment of the Guantanamo prison camp on how to meet this deadly challenge. The official silence over it has not improved transatlantic relations. Now the Bush administration is reacting to increasing domestic pressure by communicating that it strictly respects the UN Convention Against Torture. To strengthen the United States in these efforts would be much better now than establishing a fact-finding committee in Berlin."

2. "Rice Slows Down"

Stefan Kornelius argued in an editorial in center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (12/8):

"Confronted with criticism from Europe and under

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pressure from Congress, the Bush administration has now pulled the emergency brakes as Condoleezza Rice 'clarified' the U.S. interrogation practices.. The conclusion follows that thus far, U.S. agents were allowed to torture prisoners outside of the United States. As of today, the UN Convention is applicable to U.S. personnel in and outside the United States. This means that the previous interrogation practice will cease to exist because the UN Convention rules it out. And second, the view is no longer valid that many things are allowed outside the United States that are not allowed in the United States.

"Guantanamo, CIA prisons, the system of the anti-terror fight is slowly collapsing. It will be long before courts will ban imprisonment without any reason. For the Bush administration this is a serious defeat. This defeat is even more pronounced because Rice had to announce it in another country. The personnel is beginning to sway; panic is dominating in the Bush train."

3. "Finally"

Business daily Financial Times Deutschland of Hamburg (12/8) judged:

"We would have liked such a clear statement before. Finally, Secretary Rice clearly stated that U.S. personnel are not allowed to torture prisoners. Thus the legal hairsplitting about an exact definition of torture has come to an end. In a central issue, the United States is returning to an uncompromising rule of law. This is enormous progress, even though it is not clear what were the reasons for this change. but the reason could be the fierce debate in the United States, and it is also possible that the unfortunate Rice visit to Germany may have contributed to it..

"There is no doubt that it would have been better if Rice had used such clear words before her trip to Europe, and this would also include that the Bush administration would say that it is rectifying previous mistakes. It does not strengthen the credibility of the U.S. government that it pretends it has always interpreted the rules in the same way as before. But two questions still remain open: a clear renouncement of renditions is still in the offing. And Washington could even improve transatlantic relations if the rule of law got clear priority in these relations again. Not out of indulgence for terrorists, but out of self-respect and respect of common western values."

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4. "Turnabout In Kiev"

Washington correspondent Dietmar Ostermann filed the following editorial for left-of-center Frankfurter Rundschau (12/8):

"What sound like a self-evident matter is now important because it was not self-evident in Washington.. It is possible that the U.S. secretary of state was fed up with defending a policy in Europe, which her government is giving up anyway. This new legal interpretation on the anti-torture convention shows the Bush administration only anticipates a decision from Congress, where a global ban on 'torture lite' has the best chances to be adopted and become law despite the presidential threat to veto the bill.

"But time must tell what this turnabout from Kiev will mean for the prisoners in the fight against terror. In the past, Washington always included backdoors in well-sounding statements. We do not torture, but torture was defined to such a degree that it was no longer recognizable. What does Washington now understand under the term 'cruel and inhumane torture treatment?' Should the formulation that this is banned for Americans also be the loophole that would allow private contractors to do this? And will other internationally recognizable norms also apply to secret CIA prisons abroad? In Kiev, Rice raised more questions than she gave answers."

5. Centrist Neue Presse of Hanover (12/08) opined:

"Secretary Rice leaves us helpless with her statement from Kiev. U.S. personnel are not allowed to torture prisoners outside of the United States. By saying this, she says something that is self-evident. The fact that this change of course takes place only under international pressure allows us to look at past events: Was torture approved when it happened far away from the United States? And is it still allowed, if it is not exercised by but only on behalf of the United States? Rice's statements sound like a confession, a confession without showing remorse."

6. Centrist DarmstQdter Echo (12/08) opined:

"The public in Europe closed its eyes for much too long to this monstrosity and the governments silently tolerated this, possibly in order not to strain relations with Washington even more. We cannot assume that the powers-that-be in Europe did not know about the dark side of the U.S.

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anti-terror fight, did not know about the dungeons and the CIA-organized kidnappings of alleged terrorists in the heart of Europe. What would be the value of domestic intelligence services, including the Bundesnachrichtendienst, if they had not known about these things."

7. Centrist Abendzeitung of Munich (12/08) argued:

"It is unbearable to see how this America treats its prisoners, it is unbearable to see how this America reclaims an area for itself in which no law is valid; and it is no less bearable to see that German agencies take note of this and simply shrug their shoulders. It may be possible that it is necessary to go at it hammer and tongs, but this fight will certainly be lost if circumspection, manners and any ethic foundation of one's own measures are lost. The German accomplices to the CIA debacle should face a intensified interrogation by parliament."

C. (Germany-U.S.) Reaction To El Masri Case

1. Dirk Mller commented on regional radio station Westdeutscher Rundfunk of Cologne (12/07):

"The efforts of the Red-Green government to clear up the [el Masri] case and to point clearly to the United States that its methods are unacceptable are really meager. It is a mockery when we compare this with the noble claims with respect to human rights, which the SPD and the Greens wrote on their flags when entering office. What is the value of the correct German decision not to send any German soldiers to Iraq if the government, when one at the same time silently tolerates illegal U.S. methods according to the slogan: "I close my eyes and what I then do not see does not exist?" Of course it is right that only little of the activities of the intelligence services comes to the fore. But this should be the case only as long as they stick to the rule of law. but this did not happen in this case. That is why it must come to light and thus the responsibility of the Red-Green government..."

2. Centrist Neue Osnabrcker Zeitung (12/08) argued:

"A new beginning of German-American relations has now been thwarted. There has not even be a joint declaration of both governments of the things that the chancellor told the U.S. secretary of state 48 hours ago about the el Masri case. This is bizarre. The former Schrder Cabinet is now in a very bad position. It was so proud of its opposition

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to the United States in the Iraq war, but when it was necessary to criticize the violation of the law and to

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insist on damages for a kidnapped German national, it showed leniency. Now that everything has come to the fore, the reactions are vacillating between hesitant concessions and the unbearable cynicism of ex-interior minister Schily."

3. Centrist Mrkische Allgemeine of Potsdam (12/08) had this to say:

"Since 9/1, the United States has lived with the awareness that it is in a war on terror. The Europeans in turn are convinced that they live in peace despite the threat from terrorists. The case of German national Khaled el Masri shows that this different perception of reality always leads to tensions. It is right and important that the new German government discusses the matter in public and tries to clear open questions. But it does not make sense to pillory the United States now, since Germany continues to depend on close cooperation with the U.S. intelligence services, for Islamic terror is also threatening us."

4. Centrist Thuringische Landeszeitung of Weimar (12/08) opined:

"Cowardice before a friend: This seems to be ex-interior minister Schily's attitude. And in addition, we must raise the question why ex-ambassador Coats did not inform former foreign minister Fischer, who could have clarified the matter through diplomatic channels with Secretary Rice? It seems that Coats chose Schily because he expected it to be easier to gain Schily's silence."

D. (U.S.-Ukraine) Rice In Kiev

1. "Western Prospects"

Klaus Dieter Frankenberger noted in an editorial in center-right Frankfurter Allgemeine (12/8):

"The Russian leadership will certainly not have been amused that the U.S. secretary of state chose the Ukrainian capital in particular to communicate her message because the first part of this message was directed at Moscow. Secretary Rice criticized efforts to intensify controls of

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international foundations and Russian organizations to prevent supporters of democrats from becoming as high-spirited as in Georgia or Ukraine. Putin does not want to allow anyone to disrupt his activities to develop an authoritarian state. In this situation it is good that at least America raises its voice. The second part of the message has to do with Ukraine's western orientation, i.e. with geo-politics and, when they apply the old interpretation, with spheres of influence. For much too long, the West accepted Moscow's claim that Ukraine is Russia's political and economic front yard, if not more. Following Yushchenko's election, Kiev is trying to improve relations with the West. In Kiev, people are singing the song of euro-Atlantic structures in such a fervent manner as the Poles and Balts did in the past.. This western orientation of Ukraine deserves support. Washington supports it, but do the Europeans do enough?"

E. (Venezuela) Elections

1. "Prospects For Change"

Daniel Deckers editorialized in center-right Frankfurter

Allgemeine (12/8):

"Were the elections in Venezuela really as transparent as the election monitors from the OSCE and the OAS claim? It would be much better to point out that the Venezuelans did not vote at election machines but voted with their feet. The turnout halved from 50 to 25 percent. This cannot be attributed solely to the election boycott by the most important opposition parties. The massive restraint must be interpreted as an indication that the support for the president, despite generous social programs, is far smaller than his propaganda at home and on the international stage wants us to believe. Not only is poverty on the rise, but also corruption in the military and the state. But this analysis is not a consolation for Chavez's opponents and his 'Bolivarian' revolution. Without a political opposition and a willing judiciary and parliament, Chavez can now begin to work for his re-election next year. But this also means that there will be no regime change based on democratic, peaceful ways in Venezuela for the foreseeable future."

F. (WTO) Hong Kong Meeting, Trips

1. "The Curse Of Past Successes"

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Guy de Jonquiere opined in business daily Financial Times Deutschland of Hamburg (12/8)

"The debacles from Seattle and Cancn showed how difficult it has become to predict the outcome of ministerials. but we can dare to make two forecasts for the Hong Kong meeting: first, the participants will not be able to overcome the Doha blockade; and second, all participants will describe the summit as a success.. The governments already postponed the really difficult decisions to next year to avoid a crisis in Hong Kong. It is sad that the main focus of ministers was to avoid another embarrassing debacle.. The difficult history of the Doha round showed that the problem is not based on a few disagreements but is based on a flaw in the system. One mistake was, for instance, to declare the eighth round the 'development round' in order to convince developing countries, which had doubts about the success of the meeting..

"The greatest threat to the world trade system, however, are not the French farmers, but the political apathy that a success creates. A failure of the Doha Round could change this coziness into a cynical indifference. Even a weak result from the talks in Hong Kong would be paralyzing and would offer a pretext to sit back and take things easy.. Such an outcome would intensify the flight to bilateral agreements. This trend began after the Seattle summit and it is really alarming that it is led by countries like Singapore and Japan which were previously advocates of the multilateral system.. Second, the marginalization of the WTO would question the value of arbitration courts, which form the foundation of the organization. Their effectiveness depends on the willingness of its members to stick to its rules. If the WTO courts are no longer accepted, the bulwark against protectionism will be weakened. These are bad prospect but the situation could still change. Everything depends on whether the governments in Hong Kong remember their former mistakes in trade history. If not, they will repeat these mistakes. But it was these mistakes, which led to the creation of a

multilateral system."

2. "A Good Recipe"

Center-left Sueddeutsche Zeitung of Munich (12/8) wrote:

"With its latest move, the WTO has invalidated the

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TRIPS agreement. In view of the mass dying caused by AIDS in the poor countries in the world in particular, the WTO acted correctly, even though the procedures to stick to these special rules may be very complicated. If companies are now afraid of a misuse of the agreement and warn that the stimulus for the development of new AIDS medication will be lost, then this is understandable at first sight. But the large pharmaceutical companies are ignoring one important aspect: AIDS is an unprecedented global disaster and requires unprecedented measures."

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